

CD 2004--113/114

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2004-2005

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Wednesday, December 8, 2004
8 pm, MacMillan Theatre

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music
presents

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Raffi Armenian, conductor

PROGRAM

Rosamunde Overture

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Evan Mitchell, graduate student conductor

Concerto in A Minor for Violin and Cello, Op. 102

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Allegro

Andante

Vivace non troppo

Scott St. John, violin; Shauna Rolston, cello

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 55

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Allegro con brio

Marcia funebre: Adagio assai

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Allegro molto

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Program Notes

Rosamunde Overture

FRANZ PETER SCHUBERT

Born in Vienna, 1797

Died in Vienna, 1828

By 1823 the prolific Franz Schubert had written hundreds of compositions: songs, piano pieces, string quartets and other chamber music, choral pieces, symphonies, and several stage works. And while he enjoyed local success with his smaller compositions, his operas brought him nothing but frustration. He had placed high hopes on his 1822 opera *Alfonso und Estrella*, but could not get it produced in Vienna; his comic Singspiel *Die Verschworenen* of 1823 ran into trouble with the Austrian censors; and plans to mount his *Fierrabras* later that year collapsed when the costly failure of Weber's opera *Euryanthe* forced the Kärntnertor Theatre to cut expenses.

But Schubert's difficulties with Vienna's unpredictable theatrical world paled in comparison to his health problems. In 1822 he had contracted syphilis, and the debilitating, incurable disease threw his life into a crisis. Yet he continued to work, on one occasion playing piano for an evening of his own songs (a "Schubertiade," as such events were called) where "after the performance of some melancholy songs, the entire female part of the audience . . . dissolved into tears and the concert came to a premature end amidst loud sobbing."

And he continued to compose. Late in 1823, Schubert was asked by the management of Vienna's Theater an der Wien to write incidental music for a new play, *Rosamunde, Fürstin von Cypern* (*Rosamunde, Princess of Cypress*). The play was by Wilhelmina von Chézy, who had written the libretto for Weber's failed *Euryanthe* – and this new work, faring no better with the critics than her collaboration with Weber, was withdrawn from the stage after just two performances.

The history of the *Rosamunde Overture* is somewhat complicated. It

seems that Schubert, pressed for time, used the overture of his unperformed *Alfonso und Estrella* for the two *Rosamunde* performances – but when the incidental music for *Rosamunde* was published, Schubert's music for another play, *Die Zauberharfe* (*The Magic Harp*) of 1820, appeared in print as its overture. Thus, no *Rosamunde Overture*, per se, appears to have been ever composed.

No matter – the piece now known the *Rosamunde Overture* is an elegant and stylish example of Schubert's theatrical music. After a stern introduction and a slow, brooding section, a light, airy, pastoral theme emerges. Gradually the orchestra builds in strength, into a full-blown Rossinian romp.

Concerto in A Minor for Violin and Cello Op. 102

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born in Hamburg, 1833

Died in Vienna, 1897

Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim first met in 1853, and the composer subsequently wrote several works for his violinist friend: the *Violin Concerto* of 1878, and three violin sonatas. Joachim reciprocated by arranging the first ten of Brahms's *Hungarian Dances* for violin and piano in 1871. However, in early 1880s, the two men had a falling out when Brahms sided with Joachim's wife, Amelie, during the couple's bitter divorce. Thus, the "Double Concerto" of 1887 was, in part, written as a gesture of conciliation towards Joachim. As well, Brahms had made a promise to write a concerto for the cellist Robert Hausmann – and so this work, written for both Joachim and Hausmann, fulfilled two purposes.

Brahms was self-consciously aware of the unusual – almost unprecedented – nature of his concerto. As he was composing it, he wrote to his publisher: "I must tell you about my latest folly, a concerto for violin and cello!" And to

Joachim: "I have of late been unable to resist the idea of a concerto for violin and cello, however much I have tried again and again to talk myself out of it."

After a brief orchestral introduction, the first movement is suddenly interrupted by a virtuosic outburst in the cello – in effect, announcing that Brahms intends to defy all conventional formulas. The violin soon joins the cello in the closest thing to a cadenza found in this concerto. Throughout the movement – a dramatic piece, but with lyrical interludes – the composer avoids opposing his soloists against the full *tutti* forces of the orchestra. The violin and cello appear only against light accompaniment: the two instruments play in parallel motion, become contrapuntally entwined and complete each other's phrases.

In the second movement the violin and cello are blended with the orchestra; the melodic material is graceful, and the textures are subtle and delicate. However, the tranquility of the piece is challenged by several comical, almost grotesque, interruptions from the soloists, before calm is restored. Finally, the last movement is generally lively piece that has been described as "possessing all the characteristics of a rondo without its form." Here the solo parts are technically demanding: decorative filigrees, complex chords and stratospheric ranges are required of both the violin and the cello.

The *Concerto in A Minor for Violin and Cello* was premiered in Cologne in 1887, with Joachim and Hausmann as soloists, and Brahms conducting. The piece is in fact Brahms's last orchestral work: for the rest of his life the composer devoted himself to smaller, more intimate forms.

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major Op. 55 "Eroica"

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born in Bonn, 1770

Died in Vienna, 1824

It is well known that Ludwig van Beethoven originally dedicated his

Symphony No. 3 to Napoleon Bonaparte. In fact, the idea of honouring the French leader with a musical work may have first been suggested to Beethoven as early as 1798, by the French ambassador to Vienna. However, when Napoleon abandoned his egalitarian principles and crowned himself Emperor of France, in 1804, Beethoven struck out the dedication, saying instead that his symphony was composed "in memory of a great man." The composer never forgave the emperor for his betrayal of democratic values: "It is a pity I do not understand the art of war as well as I do the art of music," Beethoven once mused. "I would defeat him."

Yet, as the music critic Robert Harris has pointed out, the above quotation implies a basis for comparison between the two men. To be sure, there are parallels: both rose from humble beginnings to fame and glory through the strength of their extraordinary talents. And if Beethoven was a kind of "musical Napoleon" it is nowhere more apparent than in the "*Eroica*." While his first two symphonies thrilled, shocked and amazed Viennese audiences – they were unprepared for sheer size and overwhelming power of the *Symphony No. 3*.

The first movement – a grand and dramatic "*Allegro con brio*" – wastes no time in displaying Beethoven's mastery. At more than 700 measures in length, it transcends its own sonata-allegro structure in a virtuosic display of harmonic daring, contrapuntal invention and brilliant thematic development. This is followed by a solemn "*Marcia funebre: Adagio assai*" in a vast ABA form: in its midst there is a triumphant outburst in the winds, before its tragic mood is restored through a piously mournful fugato. The third movement, "*Scherzo: Allegro vivace*," is an outpouring of joy and delight – at times coyly understated, at other times overwhelming in its exuberance. In the last movement – "*Finale, Allegro molto*" – Beethoven draws on both sonata and variation principles, and borrows thematic material from his own

earlier works: his *Piano Variations Op. 35* (the so-called "Eroica Variations") and his *Creatures of Prometheus* ballet.

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3* was first heard in a private performance in January 1805, and received its public performance at Vienna's Theater an der Wien in April. Mindful of the symphony's exceptional length, in the published parts Beethoven

urged that it "should be performed at the beginning rather than at the end of a concert." He cautioned: "If performed too late, there is the danger that it will not produce on the audience, whose attention will be already wearied by preceding pieces, the effect which the composer purposed in his own mind to attain."

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Biographies

Raffi Armenian was trained in the European tradition. In Vienna he studied piano, conducting, voice and composition with Bruno Seidlhofer, Hans Swarowsky, Ferdinand Grossmann and Alfred Uhl respectively.

Well represented on television and recordings, Maestro Armenian has conducted a television version of Menotti's *The Medium* which was nominated for an Emmy Award. He received a Juno nomination for a recording of Ravel and Schoenberg with Maureen Forrester, and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, which he founded. In 1988, The CCE was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque from the Canadian Music Council for its *Serenades* album, which was subsequently nominated for a Juno Award. Repertoire from the Ensemble's *Music from Berlin in the 1920s* was selected by Woody Allen to underscore his film *Shadows and Fog*. Among his recordings on CBC Records include *Joyous Light*, a highly acclaimed recording of Armenian sacred songs with soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian and the Elmer Iseler Singers, and *Chants d'Auvergne*, featuring Karina Gauvin and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble in songs by Canteloube, which was nominated for a Juno in 2004.

A sought-after guest conductor, Mr. Armenian has led the Belgian Radio Orchestra, Enescu Philharmonic of Bucharest at the Ravenna International Music Festival, Montreal Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre symphonique de Québec, Edmonton Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic and Violon du Roy. In 2000, Mr.

Armenian conducted members of the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra in performances with soprano Edith Wiens in chamber versions of Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and Symphony No. 4 to great acclaim.

Maestro Armenian held the position of Music Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for 22 years and worked with such illustrious companies as the Canadian Opera Company, Michigan Opera Theater, l'Opéra de Montréal, Opera Columbus, Fresno International Grand Opera and for the famed Indiana University School of Music. Kitchener-Waterloo's acoustically superb "Centre in the Square" has a main theatre named Raffi Armenian Theatre. The design was strongly influenced by Maestro Armenian.

The Armenian legacy is secured by his highly acclaimed performance of Wagner's Parsifal in which tenor Jon Vickers made his final appearance in 1989. He conducted *La Belle Hélène* at l'Opéra de Québec and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with Opera Hamilton. Mr. Armenian is a recipient of the Order of Canada, Honorary Doctorates from Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, and the Golden Jubilee Medal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Toronto since 1999, Mr. Armenian conducts the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Under Mr. Armenian's direction, the orchestra performed the world premiere of R. Murray Schafer's *Shadowman* with renowned percussion ensemble Nexus in 2001. The orchestra has made two successful tours to

Montreal in joint performances with the Montreal Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra.

Evan Mitchell is active both as a conductor and as a performing percussionist. Currently working towards his Masters degree studying under Raffi Armenian, Evan has appeared as guest conductor for many ensembles including the Laurier Wind Ensemble, MacMillan Chamber Choir and the NUMUS New Music Ensemble. Last year Evan was an active participant in the inaugural University of Toronto Bach Festival with Helmuth Rilling, conducting Bach cantatas and working in rehearsal and masterclass settings with Maestro Rilling. Upcoming engagements include a premiere of Law Wing-Fai's "Wind Dance" for the Pentaedre Wind Quintet and Penerecki String Quartet. Evan is currently assistant conductor of the Kitchener-Waterloo Youth Symphony Orchestra, and is director of the Flute Ensemble at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Shauna Rolston has been described as impressive, fearless, colourful and provocative - her work breathtaking, powerful, intimate and pure. Shauna Rolston, one of Canada's most celebrated musicians, has been captivating audiences with her passion for music since age two.

Since making a spectacular Town Hall debut in New York City at age 16, Shauna continues to perform regularly around the world, in recital and concerto engagements. Recent highlights include a two-week tour of Finland and Iceland with Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, as a member of her delegation as well as performances at the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico with the China Philharmonic as soloist in the Concerto Grosso for three cello soloists by Krzysztof Penderecki under the direction of the composer, and the premiere of Doug Schmidt's concerto written for her entitled, *Granny's Aching Back*, with the Vancouver, Victoria and Banff Festival Orchestras. In recent months, Shauna's engagements have

included performances with the Utah, Winnipeg and Toronto Symphonies as well as a recital at New York's Lincoln Center.

An enthusiastic advocate and performer of the music of our time, Shauna has had an astounding number of works written for her. In addition to the plethora of Canadian commissions and premieres by such distinguished composers as Oskar Morawetz, Jean Coulthard, Violet Archer, Bruce Mather, Christos Hatzis, Kelly-Marie Murphy, Chan Ka Nin and Heather Schmidt, Shauna has given the premieres of concerti by Krzysztof Penderecki, Gavin Briers, Mark Anthony Turnage, Rolf Wallin, Augusta Reid Thomas and Karen Tanaka.

Winner of Best Classical CD at the 2002 West Coast Music Awards, Shauna's CD entitled, *This is the Colour of My Dreams*, is dedicated to concerti written for her by Hatzis, Schmidt, Chan and Murphy. Her forthcoming CD (Fall 2004), *Shauna and Friends*, features arrangements of popular favorites by Claude Kenneson for solo cello and an ensemble of 12 cellists conducted by Keri-Lynn Wilson.

Shauna's most recent video release, *Swans*, with prima ballerina, Evelyn Hart, and directed by Veronica Tennant was premiered at the 2004 International Moving Pictures Festival.

Following her studies at Yale University with the distinguished cellist and pedagogue Aldo Parisot, where she earned a BA in History of Art and a Master of Music degree, Shauna joined the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto as a professor of cello and co-head of the string department. She is also a visiting artist at the Banff Centre for the Arts.

Scott St. John captures the attention of the musical world through his riveting and virtuosic performances on violin, and viola. As the Pittsburgh Press has noted, "he is a musician of impeccable taste and natural instincts. He lets the music do the talking." New recognition for his skill and insight came in spring 2003, when he was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

At the University of Toronto, Scott St. John is co-head of the string department, coordinator of string chamber music, and teaches violin and viola. Actively involved in the University of Toronto's concert series, he has presented two special chamber music programs featuring the music of Dvorak and the Beethoven Septet. With pianist Lydia Wong, he will present the fourth and final instalment of the Beethoven Violin Sonata Cycle featuring Sonatas 8, 9 ("Kreutzer") and 10.

Recently, Scott St. John has taught in the prestigious Master Classes at the Banff Centre for the Arts, and coached chamber music at Stanford University's St. Lawrence Quartet Institute. Performances during the past season include Calgary Philharmonic, Toronto Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, a Music from Marlboro tour in the US, Scotia Festival and the Seattle Chamber Music Festival.

A champion of new music, St. John has been involved in commissioning works

from Heather Schmidt, Kelly-Marie Murphy, Robert Maggio and Ray Luedecke. He played the American premiere of Peter Maxwell Davies' *A Spell for Green Corn*, and frequently performs works by Thomas Ades, Jean Coulthard, Chan Ka Nin, Christos Hatzis, Glen Buhr and Gary Kulesha. New projects include collaborations with Parmela Attariwala and South African composer Bongani Ndodana.

Scott St. John's recordings can be heard on Marquis Classics, NAXOS, CRI, and Ancalagon Records. His newest release, *Salon Parisien*, is on CBC records. A project to record the Brahms Sonatas for violin and viola is forthcoming.

Born in London, Ontario, Scott St. John began his violin studies at age three with Richard Lawrence. In 1990, St. John graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied violin with David Cerone and Arnold Steinhardt, and chamber music with Felix Galimir.



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